

A Celebration of Life

Whenever you arrive at a church for the first time, you notice things that stand out. You notice architecture. You notice smells. You notice sounds. You also notice people. Michelle and Heaven would always walk into the church with a smile and Heaven barking before she quieted down. Heaven has worshipped with us on stage a couple of times as well.

Today is a difficult day. It's a day where love and lessons are remembered and a day where loss is realized. Today is a day where we are taught something and it isn't by an enjoyable teacher. Many of us have fond memories growing up and learning new things whether it be at church or school or home with our parents and siblings. As humans we learn and we grow and the lessons we take with us impact our lives from the crib to the grave. But there is a teacher whose lessons we cannot stand listening to and this teacher is Death. Death teaches us something about ourselves, our loved one, and our God. God's Word says much about death and loss and today we need the comfort of what the Word of God says.

Death is a reality in this life. It is something that happens and some people are fearful of it while others don't seem to care much about it; some people even refuse to even acknowledge it. Many wonder why death is a thing in the first place and the Bible gives us the answer for this question: The reason that death exists is because we have sinned as humans. God promised that if Adam and Eve disobeyed that they would surely die and this is what we see in our world today. God keeps His Word and this might sound like a bad thing - if death is the end of this life and the start of our eternal life

2 Timothy 4:7-8 ESV

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the

Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Celebrating a life well lived is more than just remembering moments; it is about honoring the character, faith, and service of the one who has passed. A life well lived is one that bears fruit for the kingdom of God, that touches lives, and that exemplifies the love and grace of Jesus Christ. As we reflect on the life of our dear loved one, we are reminded that their journey was one marked by faithfulness, sacrifice, and devotion to God's will.

As we mourn, let us also celebrate the life of faith that has now been crowned with glory. For those who die in Christ, death is not the end, but the beginning of eternal joy. We honor their memory by continuing to live in the same faithfulness and purpose that they demonstrated.

Ecclesiastes 3:4 ESV

Reminds us that there is a time and season for everything.

4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance

And we will see in the pictures and videos that Michelle danced.

Nothing can really prepare us to mourn a family member, especially a parent. As parents, we raise and train up our children to live how God wants us to live. We become the image and reflection of God. As we learn from our Heavenly Father, we also learn from our earthly parents. There is a time to cry and to mourn. But we need to remember what God has told us.

Matthew 11:28 ESV

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Romans 15:13 ESV

[13] May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

We don't grieve if we don't love. Do you grieve for a person you don't know? Other than a passing empathetic understanding, we rarely shed a tear for someone whom we have never met. We don't generally tear up over the obituary section of the newspaper or attend the funerals of strangers. The Thessalonians knew what it meant to love. They understood God's command, and they were obedient in loving well (vv. 9–10)—so much so that a gentle instruction was offered not to take advantage of the kindness of the church, but instead to work hard and take care of your affairs (vv. 11–12). This was a loving, generous church. With that love comes the inevitable sorrow of loss.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-18 ESV

9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, 10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, 11 and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

The Coming of the Lord

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus,

God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord,[a] that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Paul tells us. Everyone who believes will experience this glorious resurrection. “We have hope even in the midst of death because those who die ‘in Christ’ will live again. Physical death is not the end of our existence nor that of our loved ones and friends who are believers. Those who believe that this is the only life there is must despair and grieve without hope because there is no hope apart from Christ.” Our hope is found in the power of Christ’s resurrection for the living and the dead, and we can encourage one another with this truth in times of grief.

Though we can cling to this hope, we shouldn’t use it as a club to minimize the natural sorrow we experience in the absence of our loved ones. We have a deep and abiding hope, but we still miss people in the interim before we are reunited for eternity. Pretending we don’t have these feelings can be harmful. Even Jesus experienced sadness and cried.

John 11:35 ESV

35 Jesus wept

And Scripture instructs us to mourn with those who mourn

Romans 12:15 ESV

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

We know that “the Lord is near to the brokenhearted”

Psalm 34:18 ESV

18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.

We can still hope with tears in our eyes.